

UTERINE CANCER



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Cancer of the endometrium (lining of the uterus). It usually affects postmenopausal women ages 50 to 60.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Early stages:

- Bleeding or spotting, especially after sexual intercourse. This often occurs after menstrual activity has ceased for 12 months or more. A watery or blood-streaked vaginal discharge may precede bleeding or spotting.

- Enlarged uterus. It is sometimes a large enough mass to be felt externally.

Later stages:

- Spread to other organs, causing abdominal pain, chest pain and weight loss.

CAUSES

Unknown. Appears to be linked to several predisposing factors listed in Risk.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Diabetes mellitus.
- Obesity.
- High blood pressure.
- Use of estrogen without also using progesterone.
- Family history of breast or ovarian cancer.
- History of uterine polyps, menstrual cycles without ovulation, or other signs of hormone imbalance.
- Delayed menopause.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Obtain a pelvic examination every 6 to 12 months.
- Obtain medical care for any uterine bleeding or spotting after menopause.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

With early diagnosis and treatment, 90% of patients survive at least 5 years. A poorer prognosis occurs in older patients and when there is a delayed diagnosis.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Fatal spread of cancer to the bladder, rectum and distant organs.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may be numerous, first to diagnose the cancer, and then to determine any spread to other body organs (staging). May include laboratory blood tests, Pap smear, liver function tests, chest x-ray, CT scan, mammogram, barium enema, MRI, vaginal ultrasound, endometrial biopsy, D & C (dilatation and curettage).

- Treatment will depend on the extent of the disease, and may involve one or a combination of the following: Surgery, radiation, hormonal therapy, and chemotherapy.

- Surgical treatment may involve removing the uterus, and usually, the ovaries and fallopian tubes.

- Psychotherapy or counseling for depression may be recommended.

- Additional information available from the American Cancer Society, local branch listed in the telephone directory, or call (800) ACS-2345. Another source is the Cancer Information Clearinghouse at (800) 4-CANCER.

MEDICATIONS

- Anticancer drugs, including cortisone drugs.
- Hormone therapy.

ACTIVITY

Resume your normal activities as soon as symptoms improve after treatment. In most cases, full sexual activity after therapy should be resumed as soon as possible.

DIET

No special diet, but eat a well-balanced diet even if you lose your appetite from radiation or drug therapy. Vitamin and mineral supplements are helpful.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of uterine cancer.

- The following occur after surgery:

- Excessive bleeding (soaking a pad or tampon at least once an hour).

- Signs of infection, such as fever, muscle aches and headache.

- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.